



DATE: May 16, 2023

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Fire Chief

SUBJECT: Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Negotiate and Execute an Agreement With First Responder Wellness For the Provision of the First Responder Wellness Mental Health Program For the Hayward Fire Department in an Amount Not to Exceed \$89,407

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopts a resolution (Attachment II) authorizing the City Manager to negotiate and execute an agreement with First Responder Wellness, for the provision of the First Responder Wellness mental health program, to members of the Hayward Fire Department (“HFD”) in an amount not to exceed \$89,407.

SUMMARY

The HFD has identified the need for a comprehensive wellness plan for the mental health of its frontline staff. The necessity of supporting first responder health and wellbeing is crucial considering the devastating effects mental illness can have on first responders, whose jobs entail dealing with emotionally charged scenarios on a daily basis. The First Responder Wellness program (“the Program”) is a multi-faceted approach to mental health for all sworn staff. The Program will begin at onboarding and will include mental health screenings, peer support team training, support for first responder families, critical incident stress management, wellbeing retreats, and retirement transition guidance. The services span the lifetime of employment and include virtual and in-person support.

BACKGROUND

An estimated 30% of first responders develop behavioral health conditions including, but not limited to, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This is approximately 10% more than the 20% of the general population that develop behavioral health conditions¹. It is the intent of the HFD to ensure the overall wellbeing of all frontline team members.

¹ <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>

The Program is a comprehensive plan for ensuring the wellbeing of our frontline team members from the inception of employment and throughout their employment with the City. The Program will be utilized during the hiring process, by conducting pre-employment psychological testing and will continue to a three-part program throughout the first year of employment.

There will be concurrent training for veteran employees to provide coping strategies, mental performance training, and in-depth training for the designated peer support team. As needed, there are additional levels of support for any escalated concerns, including substance abuse, trauma management, and spouse/family support.

The facility for in-person support is located in Southern California, and the estimated costs provided do not include travel-related expenses. The current quote for services is based on an estimate of participation and may fluctuate based on employment needs. The cost summary provided includes mileage reimbursement for 12 participants to attend the in-person sessions.

DISCUSSION

To maintain a well-rounded Fire Department, the focus must not only lie on first responders' physical fitness, but also on their mental wellbeing. Constant exposure to death and destruction creates a heavy toll on all first responders, and the resiliency to keep mental fortitude can waver as time goes on, creating a dangerous potential for a mental lapse.

By providing comprehensive care from the inception of employment through the transition to retirement, the Hayward Fire Department will ensure that all members have adequate mental health support to provide the tools needed to cope with the everyday stresses of the position. This is especially important since untreated mental health conditions are major factors in decreased career lifespans for first responders. By incorporating a mental wellness program into the ongoing standard work practice, it is HFD's hope that the stigma of having to seek mental health assistance will be removed, by simply ensuring that all staff have access to these necessary services.

At its basic premise, the First Responder Wellness program is designed to care for those who care for others. Program features are extensive and are designed to take a proactive approach to mental health, but also provide follow-up care based on individual needs. Specific programs and approaches have been created for employees at different phases of their careers, and focus on new recruits, management promotions, peer group support, and retirement transition.

By providing a fully immersive experience, accessibility and participation will be improved and therefore more effective in practice. In terms of retention, this is both an investment in current personnel and an incredible incentive for the onboarding process.

FISCAL IMPACT

This project is included in the FY 2023 operating budget for employee wellness for the Hayward Fire Department. There is sufficient funding to cover the cost of the service agreement with First Responder Wellness, and an additional appropriation is not required.

STRATEGIC ROADMAP

This program will improve the quality of our first responders and help retain a strong and healthy force. A quality fire service team will be well-equipped to address the needs of the city and will contribute to the improvement of community safety.

PUBLIC CONTACT

There is no public contact required for this item.

NEXT STEPS

If Council approves staff's recommendation, the City Manager will negotiate and execute an agreement with First Responder Wellness and HFD will implement the program into the onboarding and ongoing training of all frontline fire personnel.

Prepared by: Lauren Dekas, Management Analyst I

Recommended by: Garrett Contreras, Fire Chief

Approved by:



Kelly McAdoo, City Manager